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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1379th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. TADESSE (Ethiopia)

- Organization of work

- Request for hearing

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: At our meeting yesterday, we listened to delegations that advanced some proposals for reviewing our method of work and to delegations that made observations on those proposals. I shall not attempt here to summarize the views expressed, as many of the arguments advanced on both sides speak for themselves.

It is most helpful that we also had the opportunity to listen to the views of at least one of the elected representatives of one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on our agenda. I say that because I am sure we consider their voices and aspirations paramount.

Today, perhaps with a brief exchange of views and given the likelihood of exploring areas of convergence, it is my hope that we shall be in a position to channel these discussions into concrete efforts that can give us a general direction towards the consideration of the proposals, in order to further explore their merits.

I shall now call on those delegations that wish to make statements before we proceed with our consideration of the various proposals.

Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago I wish to thank you sincerely, Mr. Chairman, for having convened this important meeting of the Special Committee to review its work. In view of the time constraints which we face and the need to arrive at some early decision that would facilitate the work of the Sub-Committee's during the current session, my delegation will make only a few comments at this time on the broader issues under consideration and will concentrate on matters that affect the deliberations of the Sub-Committees.

One of the broader issues on which my delegation must now comment relates to the Special Committee's agenda. It may be more productive in the current process, which we all wish to be effective, to avoid sweeping statements that do not coincide with the facts as we all know them to be. With respect to the Special Committee's agenda, it should not be characterized as artificial and warranting a prescription for a thorough purge. Of the 36 items listed in document A/AC.109/L.1755, can the Special Committee in all seriousness be expected to remove from consideration the 21 items that deal specifically and directly with the situation in the remaining colonies? I should think not. Or should we fail to address such matters of importance as the issue of visiting missions; the issue of training facilities for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories; the issue of compliance with Article 73 e of the United Nations Charter; the item on the International Decade to Eradicate Colonialism, which encapsulates the main objective of the United Nations in the field of decolonization; the issue of dissemination of information, the importance of which was reinforced at the two regional seminars, in Barbados and Vanuatu, held in 1990; the issues of the implementation of the Declaration by specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations and compliance with the Declaration by Member States, both of which, if not pursued, could

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

render meaningless the annual preparation of reports and recommendations concerning the Non-Self-Governing Territories? Again, the answer should be "No".

With respect to the deliberations of the Sub-Committees, the proposal of the delegation of Papua New Guinea to merge the two bodies is a constructive one that my delegation hopes will be accepted. Some of the advantages of such a merger have already been eloquently addressed in different forums by Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea.

On another matter, since September 1990 there have been frequent references to the two regional seminars held in 1990. Some delegations within and outside the Special Committee have sought to duplicate the general nature of the texts adopted at the seminars. In this connection I wish to point out the following: The regional seminars were organized for specific purposes, which did not include the important annual task of the Special Committee of 24 to review the situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory. Delegations therefore cannot and should not expect to take the same approach to the issue of decolonization as was taken at the two seminars.

It is clear that the seminars were conducted under certain time constraints, and this was very important. It should also be acknowledged that the diverse and largely non-governmental nature of the participation at the seminars increased the unpredictability and the possibility of participants' pursuing agendas, political or otherwise, which were divorced from the field of decolonization. That situation did not materialise: hence the importance of restricting the deliberations during the seminars to action-oriented proposals and the enumeration of principles.

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

The regional seminars were very useful, not only because of the final reports that were adopted by consensus, but also because they afforded representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and some of the people of those Territories an all-too-rare opportunity to exchange views and ideas and to comprehend to some extent some of the useful avenues open to them at the United Nations and elsewhere for advancing their situation.

Trinidad and Tobago was fortunate to have been one of the members of the Special Committee selected to attend the seminar in Barbados. It was enlightening for me personally to witness, particularly during some informal gatherings, the eagerness with which some of the representatives of the Territories sought related information from each other on their respective situations and on the role the United Nations can play in the decolonization process.

That underscores the importance of giving serious consideration to the proposal voiced during the Special Committee's meeting yesterday to accord observer status to representatives of the Territories in meetings of the Subcommittees and the Special Committee of 24. The views of the people of the remaining colonies must remain paramount. If the Special Committee accepts such a proposal, then consideration would also have to be given to providing the representatives with the means of attending such meetings.

It was also edifying at the regional seminar in Barbados to observe the lack of knowledge about the role of the United Nations and the Special Committee in the decolonization process and about the political options available to the Territories. Indeed, as was reported in document A/AC.109/1043, the Minister for Social Services of the Turks and Caicos Islands noted that statements at the seminar had proved that the people

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

of the remaining British dependent Territories in the Caribbean were ignorant or, at best, uneducated about independence and other available options for the future political status of the Territories. The need for visiting missions and for political education programmes to be undertaken in the Territories is therefore also very important.

On the question of the proposal to consolidate into one text recommendations on 10 small Non-Self-Governing Territories, Trinidad and Tobago has never rejected that proposal, and we have no intention of doing so now. However, from the outset my delegation cautioned about certain dangers, which we can perhaps overcome with a flexible, imaginative approach. In dealing with this issue we must guard against the possibility of the consideration of the situation in some Territories being held hostage to difficulties in reaching consensus on one or two questions, which may be difficult. This predicament can lead to the worrisome practice of trade-offs in the consideration of two distinct questions. It is possible that this situation can arise with a consolidated text.

Given the views expressed yesterday by one of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, I believe that perhaps we may consider another option available to the Special Committee in dealing with this issue.

(Mrs. King-Rousseau, Trinidad and Tobago)

Perhaps we can adopt one resolution on principles while continuing to adopt individual resolutions on each Territory. Those individual resolutions would not reiterate principles, but would make a specific reference to the general resolution adopted containing such principles.

Another option available in the consolidation of texts could be the adoption of one resolution with a common administering Power.

Yet another option could be the adoption of resolutions which would include the situations of Territories in a specific region - for instance, a resolution dealing with the Caribbean Territories and a resolution dealing with the Pacific Territories.

These are not proposals that we are making at this time; we are simply exploring the various options.

The Trinidad and Tobago delegation remains eager to cooperate with other members of the Special Committee in the current review process.

Mr. BYKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): First, Sir, let me associate myself with other delegations in expressing our gratitude to you for your initiative in convening this meeting, which has made it possible for us to have a broad and interesting exchange of views. Yesterday's and today's exchange of views on ways of improving the work of the Committee and of all the other United Nations bodies that deal with the problems of decolonization has been intense. Some very interesting views have been expressed. The ideas and proposals are obviously far from being identical, but although sometimes diverging and even contradictory views have been expressed this exchange is still useful, and we hope that it will be productive.

(Mr. Bykov, USSR)

What is important is to note the common element revealed during our discussion, which is that it can, and we believe will, serve as a unifying factor for our further work. We have seen a common desire to find ways and means of heightening the effectiveness of the activities of the United Nations, and in particular of our Committee, in the implementation of decolonization.

Our delegation fully supports the view you have expressed, Mr. Chairman, to the effect that in the discussion now going on we are talking about continuing the efforts to accelerate the decolonization process in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It is well known that in recent years, in view of the positive events which have occurred in the world generally, it has become even more urgently necessary to increase the role and effectiveness of the United Nations. This is true of every area of our Organization's activities, including decolonization.

In speaking in favour of intensifying the effectiveness of the United Nations in all areas, we take a positive attitude to the efforts to rationalize the functioning of the United Nations bodies dealing with the problems of decolonization. We are firmly convinced that the work done in this area should be carried out with the aim of finding generally acceptable, realistic, balanced, well-considered approaches oriented towards achieving significant practical results. This is dictated by the desire to achieve as rapidly as possible the aims set out in the Charter and the Declaration, on the basis of the principles they contain.

We feel that many ideas and concrete proposals which have been expressed here during the exchange of views are worthy of very attentive study and

(Mr. Bykov, USSR)

consideration. Some of the ideas might be implemented in the course of the practical work in our Committee and its Subcommittees - naturally, on condition that they will indeed promote the effectiveness of our work, in the interest of achieving the goals of the Declaration, on the basis of the freedom of choice of each people concerned. In this respect, our delegation is ready to continue to cooperate with other members of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall now proceed to set a general framework for consideration of the various remarks, suggestions and proposals made so far, which are varied and which require a wide exchange of views. The first thing to do, even if at a preliminary stage, is to try to categorize the main issues that have been raised. The first category is mainly the consolidation of our draft resolutions. I have in mind the point raised regarding the omnibus draft resolution.

(The Chairman)

The second category relates to the language of a number of our draft resolutions, such as those on the activities of foreign economic interests in the Territories, military arrangements, and the role to be played by the specialized agencies in the implementation of the Declaration.

The third general category concerns items which are considered by some not to be within the mandate of the Committee. Perhaps comments related to name-calling, raised by some members, could also fall within this category.

Others have raised the question of merging the two Sub-Committees - this has been touched upon by several speakers - and the question of the duration of our sessions.

Those, I think, are the major categories of issues raised in several statements by way of proposals and suggestions.

Does any member wish to comment on the general thrust of the discussion?

Mr. HERNANDEZ MACHADO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): While it is true that several delegations have referred to the issues you mentioned and that they should be further discussed and examined, it is true also that other matters were put to the Committee, to which you did not refer.

An example is the emphasis placed on periodicity for visiting missions to all the colonial Territories in order to secure first-hand information about the events in those Territories. Another related to the question of disseminating information from the relevant United Nations bodies and seeking all possible avenues for this, so that not only Committee members, but also other Members of the Organization, the peoples of the colonial Territories and the world at large, can be made aware of the specific characteristics of each colonial Territory and of the work that is being done.

(Mr. Hernandez Machado, Cuba)

A third proposal, made yesterday and today by several delegations, was that the Committee consider guaranteeing permanent observer status to representatives of the colonial Territories in the activities of the Special Committee and its sub-committees, and in other decolonization activities of the United Nations. This morning one delegation noted - and this is very important - that this involves not only a decision on whether or not to guarantee that status, but also the fact that there are colonial Territories that would require funding to enable their representatives to participate in these activities. This too needs to be addressed.

Reference has been made - particularly yesterday - to one of the principal aspects of information, that is, the particular characteristics of Territories. We need to emphasize the unique features of each Territory. For example, today, 23 April, is Spanish-Language Day; the people of a Territory within the purview of this Committee - Puerto Rico - recently received the Principe de Asturia Prize for declaring Spanish the sole official language of the Territory. That is an interesting and characteristic development. Since 1902, the Puerto Rican people had had both Spanish and English imposed upon them as official languages. Their decision reflects a specific feature of the Territory; it was a decision by the people of that Territory to try to rescue their history, their traditions and their customs, and to live their own cultural identity, of which they had been deprived for many years by circumstances.

Those are matters my delegation believes also need to be included among the major concerns to be discussed in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: Those are important points that were raised by many speakers; they are indeed concerns that we have considered as important agenda items in several of our discussions in plenary meetings, in seminars and on various other occasions. They remain important today and should be included among our concerns. Visiting missions, dissemination of up-to-date information giving a full picture of developments in the Territories, and participation by representatives of the Territories are, as suggested, issues that require discussion and analysis both as individual subjects and as they relate to cooperation by the administering Powers.

It was my thought that these could be taken up within the general categories I mentioned, but I think it important that they also be considered on their own merits.

The question of the specific characteristics of Territories has been clearly noted in the discussion of our omnibus draft resolution; many have pointed out that any consideration of consolidating draft resolutions on the Territories should take due account of the specificity of those Territories. This point would figure in those discussions.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): My delegation would like to add a point which we consider to be very important and which could contribute to changing our approach to questions of decolonization. The proposal is based on a document submitted some days ago by a delegation which participated in the work of the working group established by the Chairman of the Fourth Committee. The proposal, which I have had an opportunity to comment on before, would have the Committee prepare guidelines for making local populations more aware of their own fate. This is somewhat different from our approach to date; traditionally, we acted through the administering

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

Powers to reach the local populations. Our recommendations were directed to the administering Powers.

We would now seek to reach directly the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to provide them with suggestions and guidelines. This could be the subject of further consideration within the structure we establish to examine the categories the Chairman has just set out.

In addition, my delegation wonders if it would be useful to consider the matter of the selective use of certain names - now in the third category - under the second category, which relates to changing the language of some of the draft resolutions we have submitted in the past.

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to the last suggestion just made by the representative of Mali in which he raised a query on selectivity, I think that that would come under the category of language and name-calling, and can be taken up under the relevant part of the discussion. The other suggestion he made has been duly noted. I think it will be considered in the appropriate framework.

I would say at this point that these are just preliminary suggestions, which can be enriched and changed or otherwise developed, as I am trying to do, if we proceed to create the mechanism for continuing these discussions and coming up with recommendations. The participants in that mechanism can agree on the procedure on how best to include as many of the proposals and topics raised and take up related matters concerning the ways to increase the effectiveness of the Committee's work. These are only general suggestions, which are by no means conclusive. As I said, they can be enriched, altered and modified. New, related elements can be suggested. Of course, we cannot go on having an open-ended list for discussions. We shall try to incorporate the suggestions within the framework of the major points raised here. This question can also be taken up, first, during the organizational session of the body we will create.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): Mr. Chairman, I would simply like to endorse the leadership that you have provided for us in the form of general categories under which specific items can be listed. On that basis, in our future work, some items could be shifted from one category to the other and new categories could be added, depending on how the discussions develop. The approach I took at the last informal consultations of the Fourth Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chairman of the Fourth Committee reflects the need to identify some specific general pattern of problems, which we would

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

then continue to examine. There was general agreement on this idea on the part of the many delegations attending that meeting. Therefore, I would simply like to endorse your approach to dealing with this problem.

The CHAIRMAN: If that is generally agreed at this point, we can proceed to deal with how to continue our discussions. In this regard, based on my consultations with members, I suggest that perhaps a better approach would be to create a working group to examine the various proposals and make recommendations to the Committee, because the view of members is that it might not be as helpful and as productive if we were to continue detailed discussions on each proposal at the level of plenary meetings of the Committee. Instead, a working group would best facilitate our work. That is the proposal I would like to submit to the Committee for its consideration. Does any member wish to comment?

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I think it is a very good proposal to continue the work in a smaller forum, perhaps in the form of a working group.

I am wondering whether we might not discuss this in the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, since most of the matters on your list concern or relate directly to the work of the Sub-Committee in its discussions of the reports and in the formulation of the draft resolutions. In my opinion, this working group or smaller body could be the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. I would not suggest that we do so right now, but I just wish to express my feeling that, if the Sub-Committee were mandated to deal with these matters and then report back to the plenary Committee at a later stage when we have come further in our discussions on each particular Territory, in my opinion this would be a better solution. But I leave it to you, Sir, and to the Committee to take a decision on the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Let me seek the views of the members on this, and then perhaps I will also explain why I suggested a working group.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): With regard to the remarks just made by the representative of Norway, who suggested that the Sub-Committee on Small Territories should take up the matter, my only comment is that my proposal involves that Sub-Committee. If we were to discuss this now, it would put the Chairman and the members in a difficult situation. So, I think your proposal, Sir, would be much better; it removes the discussions on the review to improve our work from the existing legal parameters that the Committee has already set.

The CHAIRMAN: The idea of suggesting a working group stems, as members know, from the fact that while, justifiably, some of the topics raised and issues pointed out are related to the small Territories in particular, there are certain other issues that are interrelated and that overlap with matters taken up by the other sub-committee and indeed with the larger concerns of the Committee itself. So, one possibility is such a working group, especially if it is open-ended and makes it possible to seek more general views on broader questions, including those of the small Territories. Then, when the recommendations and suggestions are forwarded to the Committee, they would already have commanded broad-based support. That is the main reason, but members are free to comment and make suggestions.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): First of all, I would like to thank you for your well-done work since yesterday's meeting in categorizing the proposals raised at that meeting. I would also like to assess the idea for continuing the discussion in a smaller forum than this one. As all of the members know, there is a forum, an open-ended informal meeting of the Fourth Committee, which is discussing the same questions.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

My delegation is not against any kind of discussion, but it thinks that there should be not only discussion but some achievement from discussion.

The proposal is to merge the two forums - that is, the working group of the Committee of 24 proposed by the Chairman and the existing forum: the open-ended informal meeting of the Fourth Committee.

Mr. ACOSTA FRAGACHAN (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation has been listening carefully to the views expressed by representatives who have already spoken. We find them extremely interesting, in principle, and we agree with your suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that, tentatively, we should try to organize our work on the lines you have indicated. I take it that the list before us is a tentative list that does not imply a categorization according to the importance of the proposals. I believe that such a categorization should be left to the working group you have suggested.

We fully support the creation of a working group. We share the view expressed by the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea that it should be constituted within the framework of the plenary Committee, in order to take into account sensitive feelings about some of the proposals presented. I also firmly believe that the working group should be open-ended. Participation should be open to any members of the Committee; their ideas should be discussed on the same footing as those put forward so far.

I would also venture to broaden somewhat the idea of the working group that you have put forward. We could categorize the list of proposals that would be submitted subsequently to the plenary Committee. They could be discussed at meetings that would be scheduled by the Committee for that purpose.

(Mr. Acosta Fragachan, Venezuela)

For the moment we have no further ideas to present. We fully support the work the Committee is engaged in with a view to rationalizing its work, and we look forward to taking an active part in it.

The CHAIRMAN: I would reaffirm that this listing is tentative and is by no means an indication of ranking. These matters would be taken up and discussed by the working group.

Mr. MDEE (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish only to endorse fully, what you have proposed, Mr. Chairman, as a way of moving forward.

I think that the fact that there is another working group handling the Fourth Committee is a separate question. The two forums are not mutually exclusive.

In my opinion, the discussions we have had here for the past two days are basically discussions of this Committee. I would hope that the working group comes out of this Committee.

Mr. HERNANDEZ MACHADO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation joins other delegations that have expressed support for your proposal, Mr. Chairman, to create a working group of the Committee of 24.

We share the view of the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea that this working group should not belong to either of the two Sub-Committees; it should be a working group of the Committee itself, open to participation by all members of the Committee who wish to participate; it should discuss all the ideas put forward, as you said, Mr. Chairman, by members of the Committee or other Members of the United Nations, by the Fourth Committee and by representatives of colonial Territories who have been given an opportunity to express their views. Subsequently, the results of the study in the working group would be submitted to the plenary Committee, where the relevant decisions would be taken.

(Mr. Hernandez Machado, Cuba)

Let me also say that, as was suggested a moment ago by the representative of Tanzania, the exercise in which we have been participating since yesterday morning - which is a continuation of the process of improving our Committee's working machinery - is internal to us; it does not contradict the exercise taking place in the Fourth Committee. We do not see the need to integrate it or link it with the exercise in the Fourth Committee - although, of course, once our Committee has analysed all these aspects and reached final conclusions, they will logically be shared with others. But I do not think, as I have said, that it is necessary to merge these groups. The analysis will be done in our Committee in conjunction with the exercise being carried out through the informal consultation group of the Fourth Committee.

Mr. LAWSON (Sierra Leone): I must first of all apologize for my delegation's participating only now in this important series of consultations in which the Special Committee is engaged. Our inability to participate earlier was the result of our preoccupation in the Mission with a number of other important matters.

Having followed the discussion so far, and also taking into account your summary, Mr. Chairman, of the views that were expressed during the earlier meetings, we feel that the proposal to set up an independent working group is commendable. It would provide a much more informal setting in which to discuss proposals that have been put forward as well as other ideas that have been floated.

Our understanding of this procedure is that the list of items the Chairman has enumerated is not final and that we shall have flexibility in so far as the list relates to other areas within the Committee's mandate. We have in mind, of course, issues that relate, for example, to the responsibility of the administering Powers to provide information under

(Mr. Lawson, Sierra Leone)

Article 73 e which we believe warrants consideration by this Committee, as well as other issues. We feel that there is much merit in discussing this matter at this time, especially as we as a delegation had made known our position on the matter last year.

We have listened also to the proposal that we could perhaps consider these matters within the ongoing informal working group of the Fourth Committee. While there might be some inclination to support that view, we might run into certain difficulties.

(Mr. Lawson, Sierra Leone)

We feel that last year and in some years before that there was an initiative which emerged from within the Special Committee to embark on a rationalization of its work. We believe this initiative should be pursued by the Committee separately, independently of whatever efforts the Fourth Committee might be undertaking. Of course, there might be a possibility that certain discussions might run parallel in both working groups; this is all to the good. At the end of the day, we might find ourselves in a position where we could be able to consolidate certain aspects of both our working groups' deliberations, and agree, perhaps, on a further course of action from there. But our feeling as a delegation is that indeed we would prefer that an independent working group of the Special Committee should be established; during the course of its deliberations, we shall be able to undertake a full discussion of these matters.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of New Zealand, an administering Power.

Mr. KEMBER (New Zealand): My delegation has followed with considerable interest the discussion in the Special Committee today and yesterday, and we look forward to the Special Committee's continuing its examination and review of its work in one forum or another.

I have one technical question relating to our role as an administering Power. We have a clearly defined status vis-à-vis the plenary meetings of the Special Committee, and indeed the meetings of Sub-Committees of the Special Committee. My question is, if the Special Committee is to set up a working group, what would be the dialogue status, if you like, of administering Powers with that working group?

The CHAIRMAN: I think most of the points have been covered by members: I want only to touch on one or two briefly.

(The Chairman)

The first point relates to the working group; it needs to be established within the framework of the Committee of 24, the plenary Committee. Of course, as was pointed out by members, it will be open-ended, and there will be ample opportunity for all who wish to make comments or advance any ideas pertinent to the deliberations of the working group.

As far as the working group of the Fourth Committee is concerned, of course we have in fact already had a chance to benefit from the outcome of the informal consultation yesterday. This can continue in the same manner in the working group. The working group needs to derive all the information possible to enrich and strengthen its deliberations with a view to coming up with helpful, constructive and strong recommendations that would make its proceedings more effective and thereby facilitate the attainment of the ultimate objective: the speedy implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

As far as the question of participation by administering Powers is concerned, I think the open-ended nature of the working group and the follow-up to the discussions in the plenary Committee will enable the administering Powers to take a real part in the discussions of the working group. I do not think there are any reasons for restricting that participation. Perhaps members would like to correct me or indicate to me if there are any procedural or juridical limitations in this respect.

Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago): Of course Trinidad and Tobago has no objection to the participation of any of the administering Powers in our work: it can facilitate the effort to reach some sort of effective decisions. But I would at this stage just like to express the hope that the same opportunity to participate in the working group will be afforded to any representative of any of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the case, because, as we have said, nobody could be a better spokesman for the Territories than the representatives of the Territories themselves. Whatever our deliberations and whatever positions we have established, all along the Committee has taken due account of the positions, statements, suggestions and aspirations of the peoples of the Territories as expressed by the representatives themselves.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): I must apologize for speaking once more, but let me attempt to describe the situation which we are now creating.

After the establishment of the working group of the Committee of 24, open-ended of course, we will have this working group, with participation by some - I repeat: some; do not have any illusions - members of the Committee of 24. I will speak openly: the working group will be composed of those members that are more or less satisfied with the way in which the Committee of 24 is handling its affairs, and maybe two, or even three, members that had made some proposals for improving its work. This working group will submit its conclusions to the Committee of 24.

On the other side, we will have the open-ended, informal meeting of the Fourth Committee, with participation by more than 50 United Nations Member States, but, in fact, without active involvement by the majority of the members of the Committee of 24. Maybe, even probably, this informal meeting will reach some conclusions and will submit them to the Fourth Committee.

Is that the best way to improve our work? My delegation is of the opinion that it is not.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to comment on the statement by the representative of Czechoslovakia because, in all honesty, I did not understand its exact objective. The members of the Committee of 24 are fully aware of the nature and the mandate of the two bodies of the General Assembly; we have our respective mandates and we have our respective programmes, and therefore I think we shall proceed accordingly.

There have never been problems of this nature when we have taken up similar issues - because we do deal with similar issues. The manner and intensity with which we deal with these issues is clearly demarcated in our mandates. Thus, the Fourth Committee has its own mandate and its own procedure for carrying it out; we have our own mandate, and we proceed accordingly.

I do not think there will be any problem. Where there is a need to cooperate, we always do. We shall continue to cooperate, we shall continue to exchange ideas and we shall continue to collaborate on our common endeavours. And where there is a need to proceed differently on our respective paths, we do so - but all in the interest of attaining the same objectives. I do not think there is any clash.

(The Chairman)

Given those observations, may I take it that the Special Committee agrees to establish the working group to proceed with the examination of the proposals and to come up with recommendations to the Special Committee in due time?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I should also like to propose to the Special Committee that the Working Group be presided over by the Chairman of one of our sub-committees. In this case I have in mind Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea to be the Chairman of the Working Group and preside over its deliberations. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Special Committee agrees with that proposal.

It was so decided.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I should simply like to take the opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Special Committee for having given me this responsibility. I shall do the best I can to assist the Special Committee to improve its work in the interests, first, of the colonized peoples and Territories and, secondly, of the United Nations and the Members involved in the Special Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I would request that the Chairman of the Working Group continue consultations with a view to speeding up the meetings of the Group in order that its recommendations can be received as soon as possible so that we can prepare ourselves for the coming meetings and specifically so that the sub-committees can consider them prior to the conclusion of their annual work. The dates of meetings of the Working Group will be announced in the Journal.

(The Chairman)

That concludes our deliberations on the agenda item, "Organization of work", which pertains mainly to the various proposals relating to method of work.

REQUEST FOR HEARING

The CHAIRMAN: With reference to communication number 2299, which was circulated to the members of the Special Committee at the 1379th meeting, which contains a request for hearing on the question of Pitcairn, the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, at its 483rd meeting, held on 18 April, decided to recommend to the Special Committee that the request be granted.

In order to facilitate the work of the Special Committee, and in accordance with a decision taken by the Special Committee at its 1377th meeting, on 21 February 1991, by which the item indicated was allocated to the bodies concerned for consideration and report, I wish to suggest that, subject to the concurrence of the Special Committee, the Sub-Committee on Small Territories hear the petitioner in connection with its consideration of the question.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.